

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 00987 101236Z  
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-12 /096 W  
-----105501 101252Z /53

R 101116Z JAN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO SECSTATE 7873  
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
AMEMBASSY MANILA  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USLO PEKING  
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE  
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 00987

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PBOR, TH, CB, VM  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON DEFENSE MINISTER LEK: VIET-NAM/  
CAMBODIAN SITUATION

REF: BANGKOK 00986

1. DURING AMBASSADOR'S CALL FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM  
WASHINGTON CONSULTATIONS, DEFENSE MINISTER LEK SPOKE AT SOME  
LENGTH ABOUT VIET-NAM/CAMBODIAN SITUATION.

2. LEK INDICATED THAT HE THOUGHT IT WAS TOO EARLY TO MAKE  
PREDICTIONS AS TO WHAT COURSE OF EVENTS IN CAMBODIAN WOULD  
BE AFTER THE VIET-NAM INVASION. LEK BELIEVED IT IS TOO EARLY  
TO PREDICT WHETHER SITUATION MIGHT DETERIORATE QUICKLY FOR  
THE CAMBODIANS OR DRAG ON FOR SOME TIME.

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PAGE 02 BANGKO 00987 101236Z

3. PERSONALLY, LEK DID NOT THINK THE VIETNAMESE WANTED TO  
OCCUPY PHNOM PENH, AS THIS WOULD ONLY CREATE ANOTHER BURDEN  
FOR HANOI, ECONOMICALLY AND IN TERMS OF VIET-NAM'S INTER-  
NATIONAL IMAGE. AFTER MOVING INTO CAMBODIA THIS FAR, LEK  
SUSPECTED THE VIETNAMESE WOULD WANT TO SEE WHAT WOULD BE  
THE CAMBODIAN REACTION. HE WAS NOT SURE WHETHER VIETNAMESE

HAD IN MIND REPLACING THE GOVERNMENT IN PHNOM PENH BUT OBVIOUSLY APPEAR TO WANT A PHNOM PENH GOVERNMENT MORE SUSCEPTABLE TO HANOI'S INFLUENCE AND THAT OF "BIG BROTHER" (READ SOVIET UNION).

4. IN LEK'S VIEW THE LONG RANGE PLANS OF VIETNAM APPEAR TO BE TO MOVE TOWARDS SOME KIND OF A FEDERATED INDOCHINA DOMINATED BY THEMSELVES. HE THOUGHT THAT THIS LONG RANGE APPROACH WAS SUPPORTED BY THE SOVIETS. HOWEVER, WHETHER VIET-NAM INTENDED THAT THIS MILITARY INCURSION WOULD IMMEDIATELY LEAD TO SUCH A RESULT IS NOT SO CLEAR. CONSEQUENTLY, LEK THOUGHT WE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT THE DIRECTION OF EVENTS WOULD BE. LEK SAID THE CAMBODIAN REACTION TO THE VIET-NAM INVASION IS NOT CLEAR TO HIM. WHILE CAMBODIANS ARE TALKING A TOUGH GAME AND DEMANDING THAT THE VIETNAMESE WITHDRAW BEFORE ANY NEGOTIATIONS, IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT "UNDER THE TABLE DISCUSSIONS ARE GOING ON" FOR SOME ACCOMMODATION.

5. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT IN THEIR EARLIER STATEMENT THE CAMBODIANS HAD LAID STRESS ON FIGHTING A PEOPLES' WAR AGAINST VIET-NAM. IF THE VIETNAMESE PLAN WAS TO PUT IMMEDIATE, DIRECT PRESSURE ON THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT AND TO DWSTROY THEIR ARMED FORCES, THE CAMBODIANS MIGHT NOT FALL INTO THIS TRAP. THEY COULD REFUSE TO BARGAIN FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE VIETNAMESE FORCES FROM THE PARROT'S  
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PAGE 03 BANGKO 00987 101236Z

BEAK AND OTHER AREAS, WHILE USING PEOPLES' WAR TACTICS TO WEAR AWAY THE VIETNAMESE. LEK INDICATED THAT HE AGREED WITH THIS ANALYSIS. HE SAID HE WAS NOT AT ALL SURE THE VIETNAMESE WOULD BE ABLE TO IMPOSE THEIR WILL ON THE CAMBODIANS.

6. LEK SAID THAT HE AND THE RTG WERE PUZZLED AS TO WHY THE CAMBODIANS PROVIKED THE VIETNAMESE INVASION, SINCE THEY HAD NOTHING TO GAIN AND WERE OBVIOUSLY MILITARILY INFERIOR. HE SPECULATED THAT THE VIETNAMESE MIGHT HAVE IN SOME FASHION LURED THE CAMBODIANS INTO PROBING INTO VIETNAMESE TERRITORY SO THAT HANOI COULD CLAIM PROVOCATION AND STRIKE BACK, THUS CREATING A SITUATION IN WHICH THEY COULD JUSTIFY INTERNATIONALLY USING THEIR MILITARY POWER, WHILE PRESSING TOWARDS THE EVENTUAL "SOCIALIST" FEDERATION OF INDOCHINA WHICH LEK BELIEVES THE VIETNAMESE HAVE AS THEIR LONGER TERM OBJECTIVE.

7. IN TALKING ABOUT THE TAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER IN THE PRESENT SITUATION, LEK SAID THAT ISOLATED INCIDENTS STILL TAKE PLACE. ALTHOUGH THE POPULAR THEORY IS THAT THE CAMBODIAN INCURSIONS ARE DUE TO CONTROVERSY OVER IMPROPERLY MARKED

BORDERS, HE DID NOT THINK THAT WAS THE REAL REASON. LEK  
SAID THAT THE BORDERS ARE WELL DEFINED WITH THE BORDER  
MARKERS GENERALLY IN PLACE. RATHER, HE SUSPECTED THE CAM-  
BODIAN INCURSIONS ARE A COVER IN SUPPORT OF THE CPT ELE-  
MENTS NOW LOCATED IN CAMBODIA. HE SAID THERE WERE AT LEAST  
TWO CPT CAMPS NWHICH THE CAMBODIANS ARE SUPPORTING, AND HE  
THOUGHT THAT THE CAMBODIANS ARE IN FACT ACTIVELY ASSISTING  
THESE THAI TERRORIST BY DISTRACTING THE POLICE AND  
MILITARY WHICH ARE ALREADY STRETCHED THIN ALONG THAI-  
LAND'S BORDERS.  
WHITEHOUSE

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## Message Attributes

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